

critical digest

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NEWSLETTER SERVICE

Oct 12, 1953 Vol VI No 8 \$10 Year \$25 3 years. NYC Weekly Theatre Newsletter LY 9-2826

New York Theatre Diary

Late Love-National 10/13/53. Michael Abbott, in association with Howard Erskin and Bonnie Alden, presents Rosemary Casey's new play with Arlene Francis, Neil Hamilton, Lucile Watson, and Frank Albertson. Staged by John C Wilson, play concerns a lady book illustrator and her influence on a Connecticut author's household...Betty Hutton Show- Palace 10/14/53. Blonde movie star featured in second half of reserved seat program. Los Chavales de Espana (The Kids from Spain) with Trini Reyes, the Trio Charlivel, the Shyrettos, and Bil and Cora Baird...End As A Man-Vanderbilt 10/14/53. Claire Heller's production of Calder Willingham's drama moves uptown from Theatre de Lys...The Teahouse of the August Moon- Beck 10/15/53. Maurice Evans and George Schaefer present John Patrick's dramatization of Vern Sneider's novel about a young officer and natives on a South Pacific isle. Robert Lewis directs cast headed by John Forsythe, David Wayne and Mariko Niki.

Current Theatre Reviews

The Little Hut- Coronet 10/7/53. Majority of NY daily critics filed mild con votes against Nancy Mitford's adaption of Andre Roussin's light comedy presented by John C. Wilson and H M Tennett, Ltd. But Chapman, News, Dash, Women's Wear, Cooke, Wall St Journal, and Colby, Journal of Commerce, recommended it as funny, frothy French farce. Ahne Vernon, Colin Gordon and Roland Culver were praised by quartet of critics. News aisle-man also filed pro notice to the new divans in the first six rows of the completely remodeled theatre. Cooke rated it as the ONLY funny play so far this season. Dissenters were split into two groups composed of those who thought the idea of a husband, his wife and her lover cast ashore on a desert isle only worth a sketch spot in a revue, and those who thought the script very witty and polished, but the performances second rate. Several remarked that none in cast came up to expectations. While others rated the London production starring Robert Morley, Joan Tetzel and Culver as far superior. As Atkinson, Times, noted without a brilliant cast it is more sophoric than a bombshell; Kerr, Herald Tribune, found featherweight romp never wonderful enough. While Watts, Post, rated it as a heavy-handed, laborious romp. McClain, Journal American, thought the production of a great farce failed because it wasn't cast as a farce. Oliver Messel's handsome isle set won cheers from all, while there was a diverse set of ideas on how well director Peter Brook fared.

Comedy in Music- Golden 10/2/53. Victor Borge's "one-man" show, which is really a "one-man" show, won 100% pro notices from the NY daily critics. Except for Watts, Post, and McClain, Journal American, who voiced the opinion that such an act should stick to nightclubs and vaudeville stages, the reviews can only be counted as raves. Funniest entertainer in the world, admits Atkinson, Times, Borge, compared Kerr, Herald Tribune, has something of Joe Cook's master placid, ingratiating incoherence. All agreed he was a master showman, whether playing the piano, chatting with the audience, or muttering complete and wonderful nonsense. Watts did state that he found him more entertaining than usual especially in his bits of musical satire.

House on Grand Street-President 10/9/53 Opening presentation of Yiddish Repertory uptown by Ben Rothman won 4 mild pro notices from "J.R.", Times, Crist, Herald Tribune, Rosenberg, Post, and Sheaffer, Eagle. Kadia Molodowsky, a Yiddish poet, was encouraged to continue playwrighting. While cast members drew split notices. Runs 6 weeks.

' Village Theatre '

What's Up is the new title for the musical comedy opening at Provincetown Oct 27 ... Rita Allen and Archie Thomson have an option on The Wise Have Not Spoken which opens at the Cherry Lane next month... Norma Winters, Paul Stevens and Bradford Hoyt have principal roles in Knight of the Burning Pestle which opens Oct 23 at Theatre De Lys. Robert Laning is director... Clarice Blackburn will star in American Gothic opening at Circle in Square Nov 10

' Off Broadway '

Uncle Vanya will be presented by Columbia Players Oct 14-17 at McMillen Theatre ... 4 one act plays are being presented at Master Institute by Ornato Players... Room Upstairs presented Oct 15 by American Theatre Wing Community Players at Broadway Tabernacle Church.

Equity Library Theatre opens its 10th season Oct 21 at Lenox Hill Playhouse with Madwoman of Chailot featuring Dorothy Patten, Sidney Walters directed.

' Vaudeville '

"Million Dollar Look", current Radio City Music Hall revue which features a fashion show, drew split notices from tradepaper critics. Billboard's pewsitter applauded the excellent, over all imaginative production, sets, costumes and lighting, while Variety mugg okayed the vaudeville segments but thought the fashion models were out of place on the huge stage. Critic also noted Honey Brothers flopped for same reason.

' Theatre Record Comments '

"John Brown's Body" (Columbia) won mild notices from Kupferberg, Herald Tribune, and Martin Billboard. Former thought it lacked unity, while latter okayed it for school use only. Tyrone Power is sole cast member to come across well, he reports.

' Shakespre are Book Comments '

11 recent books on Shakespeare are reviewed in Saturday Review.

"Shakespeare Survey 6" by Allardyce Nicoll (Cambridge) was rated almost as good as its predecessors by G B Harrison. "Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions" (Macmillan) presents a skilful presentation of the 2 types of Elizabethan theatres. Henri Fluchere's "Shakespeare" (Longmans, Green) is far better than its blurb. Albert Feuillerat's "The Composition of Shakespeares Plays" (Yale) was recommended as a god-send to harassed directors of graduate studies seeking Ph.D. theses topics. A.C. Sprague's "Shakespeare Players and Performances" (Harvard) successfully catches the impression made by some of the theatre's famous stars.

"Shakespeare: His World and His Work" by M M Reese (St. Martin's Press) was praised by Johnson, SML, as the most comprehensive brief introduction in the field for the general reader.

"Conscience and the King" by Bertram Joseph (Chatto-Windus) presents an interesting study of Hamlet, reports Charlton, Manchester Guardian Weekly. But the reviewer didn't agree with the author's conclusions on what the Bard really meant Hamlet to be.

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' Green Room Department '

TWELFTH STREET MUSE...Herald Tribune editorial welcomed the new Phoenix Theatre(see page 4). Any enterprise that holds out a chance of improving the state of the theatre in NY deserves a welcoming hand. And of late there have been encouraging stirrings from a number of houses off the beaten track. It is possible that playwrights yet unknown may find in these modest undertakings the inspiration they need to write worthily of their times.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Broadhurst managers at Strong Are Lonely opening night gave first nighters a free turkish bath via air conditioning, comments Variety...Watts, Post, feels sorry for the off stage character Ellie Martin of Tea and Sympathy, because she is never mentioned without adding how terrible she looked...Italian drama criticism, reports Bentley, New Republic, is deprived of all intellectual interest by a misguided good will which makes the critic an assistant to the press agent.

COLUMN TIPS...Ziegfeld may install a Sherry's bar, like the Met, hears Wilson, Post ...Alexis Smith will tour in the Rosalind Russell role in Wonderful Town, whispers Kilgalleh, Journal American.

FEATHERBEDDING...Victor Borge needs 4 musicians who don't play a note and 8 stagehands for his "one-man" show as much as he needs a third leg, complains World Telegram & Sun editorial. This union rule is a silly, expensive featherbedding practice that show business could well forgo.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Sudden theatrical fame brings worries, Ben Gazzara, End as A Man told Sheaffer, Eagle. He has had several movie offers, but would only want to do a good picture with good people...Gay block parties were suggested by Harold Riegelman, Republican candidate for NY Mayor, to Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun, as a method of brightening up the general atmosphere of the city.

WHERE ARE YOU?...Take A Giant Step Times' display ad frankly stated the producers' problem. Though the show got 6 "pros" of the 8 daily papers, the expected lines did not form, and the mail orders did not pour in. Unless the theatre fans acted during the week, the "hit" would close.

' Broadway TV Theatre '

Twentieth Century, the Ben Hecht-Charles MacArthur farce on theatre people, will be presented Oct 12-16 on WOR TV at 7 30 with Constance Bennett and Fred Smith. Show rated 2 100% raves from NY critics. Original production with Moffat Johnson, Eugenie Leontovich and Wm. Frawley opened Dec 29, 1932 at Broadhurst, and played 152 perfor-

mances. Critics lauded hard hitting burlesque of theatre folks. Though Atkinson, Times, thought 3rd act undone, Mantle, News, thought layman might not understand humor. ANTA production opened Dec 24, 1950 with Jose Ferrer and Gloria Swanson. Moved to Fulton for 181 performances. Hawkins, WT&S, filed mild notice,

' Pros & Cons by TMK '

Victor Borge's Comedy in Music presents one of the world's most charming and accomplished clowns. Favorite bits are skillfully blended by a master showman. Even the theatre fireman got in the act and enjoyed it.

The Little Hut is a witty light comedy in which the writing is far superior to the players. Cast merely skims the possibilities of humor. But even so it provides a chucklesome evening of entertaining theatre.

18 "Off Broadway" theatres will be operating in Manhattan during November. Diverse theories are forwarded for the new interest in these groups whose productions range from "awful" to "excellent." But the chief reason remains the low cost of production. Actors are paid either \$25 per week or \$60 if the theatre operates under an Equity Winter Stock contract. Often actors and staff work for "experience", no cash.

Newest stop on the "Off Broadway" circuit is the Phoenix Theatre, at Second Ave and 12th St. The former Stuyvesant Theatre is now being used as a movie house, and once housed the New Jewish Folks Theatre. NorOis Houghton and T. Edward Hamblen will present a series of 5 plays starting November 24 with Sidney Howard's Madam Will You Walk. Each play will run 4 weeks. The producing team have been hunting for a suitable house for years and had been scheduled to start production last year at the Irving Place Theatre. Latter house will soon be torn down. Other Off Broadway groups which will soon join Circle in Square, Theatre de Lys and Originals Only are Greenwich Mews Playhouse, Amato Theatre, Current Stages, Blackfriars Guild, and Equity Library.

Plays

Jose Ferrer will produce Cyrano, The Shrike, Richard III and Charley's Aunt for 2 weeks each at the City Center ... Porgy and Bess run has been extended to Nov 28 ... The next tenant of the Ziegfeld will be Kismet, which concluded a San Francisco engagement Oct 11.

People

Paul Muni will star in Home at Seven, R.C. Sheriff's comic melodrama which opens Dec 7... Orsen Welles arrived in NY after 5 years in Europe to appear Oct 18 on CBS TV Omnibus' King Lear... Howard Lindsay will take a 25% royalty cut as director of Prescott Proposals if he fails to keep the new Lindsay & Crouse play from getting "sloppy"... Baltimore Sun drama critic Donald Kirkley has been shifted to cover TV, but will make several trips to Broadway per year.

Theatre Film Notes

Barry Jones will play 'Mr Lundie' in MGM's Brigadoon... Picnic bought by Columbia Pictures... Main Street to Broadway opens at NY Astor Oct 13... Trans Lux 72nd St running series of films based on plays through Oct 14 including Golden Boy.

Theatre TV Notes

Modern adaption of Taming of the Shrew entitled "The Shrew" will be seen on WABD-Du Mont TV Oct 12-16 on "Mono Drama Theatre." Yvonne Sherwood plays Kate in script written by Katherine Graves.

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